

Escuela Normal Superior de Jalisco 1999 English Major Programs and teaching compared to the 2011 middle school English program of study

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to describe and reflect on the current situation of English programs and teaching, at Escuela Normal Superior de Jalisco (ENSJ), Mexico, (also referred with its initials ENSJ)², as related to public middle schools English language program of study and teaching processes, since ENSJ is the institution that forms the future teachers for the latter level. Bearing this in mind, I comparatively describe and explain, from a critical perspective, certain pedagogical actions that have been carried out either in one or both educational levels, for more than two decades; regarding EFL/ESL programs of study design and development, teachers' unit and lesson planning, methodology and assessment; but, differentiating, when possible, prescriptive from good or successful teaching practices. The main thesis statement I argue about is: "the lack of official evaluation of the different English programs has hidden and, therefore, worsened the situation". In order to provide initial evidences and arguments in support of such statement, I executed, in 2008, an evaluation to the 1999 English language programs of the English Major at ENSJ, the outcomes provided me with significant reasons to realize that national programs, designed only by experts, can be faulty, disrespectful of cultural differences and contradictory; this is significant because those English programs govern the teachers' formation process at higher education Normal Schools and of public middle school students education.

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² In fact it is not feasible to provide an accurate meaning in English to these schools names, due to their "sui generis" or culture bound character and their specific location in a few countries. A close, but still conventional translation could be "higher education normal schools."

Key words: Middle school level, programs evaluation, national English programs, teachers' formation process, degree in Middle School Education, the null curriculum

Introduction

Later in this document I explain the motivations that led me to write this essay; however, they are also more explicitly described in my Master's Degree dissertation document. Once aware that not only objectives and purposes were not being accomplished by most of the students, but was all that provoking high dropout rates. The referents used that served as a guide for the evaluation of the ENSJ English Major Programs was the English Program 1999, its purposes and objectives related with the students' English proficiency or competence, its sequence of levels, and the lack of congruity with the referents of the Common European Framework.

This paper is an invitation to engage in informed and reflective curricular analysis, regarding national programs' contents, approaches and methods, and in what should be taught, considered or used in actual practice.

The theoretical and methodological perspective used to conduct the research that supports the topic of this paper tended to be more qualitative than quantitative because of its descriptive style, its identification of the characteristics of the universe to study, strong inter-relation subject-object of study, discovery, comprehension, association of variables, observation, interviews, questionnaires, information of related previous studies; some of its outcomes obtained through the use of questionnaires are shown in numbers. Therefore, the paradigm is interpretative, qualitative, hermeneutic, since there is constant search for knowledge about the inter-relation of elements (variables) that influence certain outcomes. This knowledge is a tool for emancipation. Thus, for its emancipatory and transformative character I also regard it as critical.

Specifically, this paper is addressed to offer answers to a key question of what the implications of working with an outdated program at ENSJ are and the possible reasons for its lack of updating in relation to the 2011 middle school English program. Then it will go on to analyze the reasons to state such. It will also show how far English learning in this program and in public middle schools has been affected by these issues.

First of all, there is a description of the 1999 English program at ENSJ and the incongruities found after implementing an evaluation to it. Some of the

incongruities mentioned are the establishment of equal entrance and graduation requirements, the anachronistic sequence of the four different levels, the whole oblivion of the times set by the Common European Framework of Reference and the disproportionate distribution of outcomes. Secondly, there are the changes made to the program in order to correct the contradictions and incongruities it comes with and make it work. In third place, there is the acknowledgement of some tricky aspects of the program that used to remain uninformed to students. Then, the modification done to some assessing pathologies are presented. In the fifth place, an arbitrary demand to students in the seventh semester is shown with the intention that it stops happening. In the sixth place, two situations that are part of the null program are expounded: the lack of use of English in the English major classes despite the constant advice and emphasis within the program and the lack of thesis work or documents written in English as established in the program. In the seventh place, the huge gap of differences between the ENSJ 1999 English Program and the 2011 Middle School English Program are mentioned, including some confusions caused by the differences found between the 2011 Middle School English Program and the 2006 one. Then, the ENSJ professors lack and need for training on the 2011 Middle School English Program, followed by the lack of questioning of programs by English professors in the public system and the endless process of reform of “Escuelas Normales Superiores” (“ENSs”). Subsequently, there is the difference between English as a Second Language—name given by government to the subject of English—and English as a Foreign Language that is what any teacher facilitates in the classroom in Mexico. Later, there are some issues happening in the field of English teaching in public schools for the lack of knowledge about this field by the people in charge of education, and how their lack of expertise hinders English learning; also the lack of program evaluation, and the contradiction of expecting the development of communicative competence while outcomes are expressed in scores rather than performances and when classes are often taught in Spanish. Finally, there is the lack of official census measurement of the English proficiency of Mexican teachers of this subject and students.

English language teaching and learning viewed in broad perspective

Within the last two decades, there have been steady reforms and new curricula for the majority of the levels of education except for the higher education level of Normal Schools. In fact, at all Mexico's higher education normal schools there were three scattered reforms in the twentieth century, showing how this has been done in a more infrequent time than for the basic level. However, higher education normal schools (ENSs) –established throughout Mexico— are the official institutions in charge of forming future middle school teachers. The English programs at ENSJ, as well as mentors need to be open to experimenting and learning practices that are new to the field and to keep skills sharp and updated knowledge to meet the needs of the level for which they form and provide teachers. The curriculum of the Degree in Middle School Education has not had an official conscious and fulfilling updating for sixteen years.

In Mexico, ENSs do offer the major in English. Mentors of this major in ENSs align their formation program to the current middle school english program of study. However, ENSs are currently working with outdated programs, originating certain problems in their supposed natural relationship with middle school english teaching.

A drawback is that ENSs English programs have always been backwards in comparison with the English program for middle schools. The current 1999 ENSs English program is not the exception; it is, in fact, stalled. As mentioned by Camacho (2007), when the Escuela Normal Superior de Jalisco (ENSJ) was first time opened in 1973, it began with a program that had been created in 1959 and whose main characteristic was to be subject base while middle schools were implementing a program that was area based. Ten years later, in 1983 ENSs had a new area based curriculum just like the one middle schools had been working with for a decade.

Regarding English, middle schools underwent a reform in 1993 which gave rise to the new English program that made emphasis in the implementation of the Communicative Approach while this same change happened at ENSJ until 1999, this is, six years later.

Until 2005, everything seemed to be solid with the English Program at ENSJ. The reason to say such is because in reality an accumulation of problems had been

arising over time. Some of the problems had been originated by the English Program itself, this is due to the incongruities and contradictions within its design, but also by certain aspects of its implementation, as it will be shown later in this paper.

In 2008, the results obtained from a research study of the type of curriculum evaluation on the 1999 ENSJ English Program (English levels I to IV, semesters third to sixth) yielded important information that clearly showed why objectives had not been accomplished³. Within the results there were found omissions, contradictions and incongruities as part of this evidence in the 1999 English language major's curriculum.

One of such incongruities has to do with the entrance and graduation requirements, which are exactly the same. Evidence of this is found in the presentation of the document *Licenciatura en Educación Secundaria. Campo de formación específica. Especialidad: Lengua Extranjera (Inglés)* (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2000), clause II that refers to the initial formation of English teachers. It reads as follows: "...it is necessary to own language mastery. Thus, it is required that students entering the English Major have enough knowledge of the language, equivalent to the Intermediate-advanced level".

Regarding graduation requirements, it is stated in SEP (2000)⁴ in different statements that the goal is to reach a TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) score 550 in English IV. Designers of this program did not realize that a level upper Intermediate is translated into a TOEFL score ranging between 520 and 570 points, which means a B2 level. For instance, there is no variation between entrance and graduation requirements, as if there were no added knowledge to apprentices' existing knowledge or no behavioral modification on the part of the apprentice throughout the four semesters in which the English program is studied or the eight semesters in which the degree is attended.

Furthermore, even though there is an entrance requirement, it is accounted within the program that students' entry level is varied and that some have a basic or

³ For further information about this research study consult the MEILE master's degree dissertation "Programme Evaluation of the Embedded English Programme of the TEFL major in "Escuela Normal Superior de Jalisco" by Rebeca Díaz Farias. Library of the "CUCSH", of University of Guadalajara, Mexico, July 2008.

⁴Information in Spanish SEP (2000:25& 26 (Section General Purposes, clause number two)).

elemental English knowledge, others have a level between A2 and B1, according to the Common European Framework of Reference; regarding this acknowledged fact, another such incongruity is that English program designers did not consider the time needed to accomplish the graduation requirement, since they manage the improvement in tens of hours, when, in fact, it is hundreds of hours what is required in order to increase the score from TOEFL 350 to TOEFL 550.

Conceding to the theory developed by the *Council of Europe* and the *Association of Language Testers in Europe* that is shown in the Common European Framework of Reference, it is necessary to invest between 500 and 600 hours of study to improve from the level Lower intermediate (TOEFL 350) to the level Upper intermediate or Advanced intermediate (TOEFL 550). The ENSJ 1999 English program aims to achieve this improvement in only 260 hours (length of the English Program).

The sequence of the four English levels that compound the English Program is also incongruent. First of all, there is no attainable requirement for English I in the third semester; then, in English II, fourth semester, apprentices are required to have a score of TOEFL 400; however, in the fifth semester apprentices are requested to have a TOEFL score of 475-500, which means that they would have to increase between 75 and 100 more points than in the previous semester but in only 68 hours (one semester). It is at this point (fifth semester) when apprentices stall and show difficulty to accomplish the goal. This is in fact the problem that motivated the curriculum evaluation study done to the English program.

I started working in ENSJ in the year 2005, since then and every year I had observed there was a high level of student dropouts from the English Major in the fifth semester. That reality encouraged me to do something in order to find and provide solutions to it. It is known that the first necessary step to deal with a problem is to recognize it, and a way to facilitate the process is by first identifying and becoming aware of our reality. I was already there.

At the Teaching English as a Foreign Language Master Degree program I attended in the University of Guadalajara, I was suggested to use a quite sounded research methodology called “curriculum or program evaluation”, a new topic in trend

then. It grabbed my attention since it had become a live issue and an important source of knowledge in the diverse activities at educational institutions of modern societies.

Programs can be evaluated. In fact, not only can they be evaluated, but their evaluation should actually be a must. Evaluation is a natural activity that is very much part of our daily existence since one can informally express one's views of any course or program. However, as Woodward (1991) underlines, it is necessary to formally glean sufficient information in order to record the considered views or opinions about the program; in other words, to fall back on other more public and more formal measures based on considerably more reliable and better information.

For the purposes of educational decision making, the kind of evaluation to be used must be of a conscious and formal kind because decision making is not the result of informal, vague or ill-defined views and opinions about a program. Thus, more formal methods to evaluate are required. There must be some sort of high quality, objective, methodologically sounded, quantitative, principled and more explicit criteria as evidence on which to base educational decisions.

Evaluation consists –among other stages— of problem identification, program revision, data gathering, data analysis, comparison, interpretation or judgment of the program. Evaluation contributes to set the road for decision making. Richards (2001) states that it helps us diagnose the problems of the program in order to explain and communicate this information to the individual or group responsible for making ultimate decisions about it. Most of the definitions of language program evaluation coincide in considering that evaluation contributes to the improvement of educational programs (Richards, J. and Nunan, D. 1990; Schrier, L. 1994; Trujillo, S. 2000; White, R. 1988). Evaluation is an essential part of any program in order to make it work properly, because it is a research method that helps us measure or assess success or failure by making educational staff aware of hidden or less observable factors, and to then indirectly contribute to making emphasis in the improvement of the program as most evaluation models do.

In the same way evaluation is an essential priority of education, Richards (1996) mentions that a primary concern in education is that students attain the general objectives of a program or course of study, scope and sequence.

In addition to what Richards (1996) mentions above, he underlines that in most educational contexts, having high numbers of students who do not obtain the score required by the English program will call the attention of everyone involved. In the very especial case of apprentices at ENSJ undergoing a situation like this is worrying, and it worsens more if we consider that the most valued aspect a non-native English teacher needs, according to Murdoch (1994), is a high level of English language proficiency.

At the end of the English program evaluation research, after examining, identifying and understanding in detail the aspects or components of the English program in general, but mainly those that were provoking high percentages of apprentices' low TOEFL scores and dropouts. I was finally able to know the reasons. I gained explanation and evidence of the elements of the program that provoked the results. I was able to know why outcomes were not the expected and why students struggled so much in order to obtain the set score. This is a process that all teachers should seek to effectuate in order to know what is appropriate and what is not and what changes must be generated to redefine programs. In other words, this is something similar to what Frigerio (2001) concludes, not are the reforms themselves which decide or generate real changes, but, above all, the way at which teachers "collectively" appropriate them, work with them and redefining them.

For instance, following those steps mentioned in the paragraph above gave me the track and the suggestion that it was necessary to start making some changes in order to correct the situation of dropouts in the English Major. Among those changes, there is a Power Point Presentation designed to show to my English major apprentices as early in their career as possible (second semester). Fortunately, I have been in charge of teaching the subject "Introduction to English Teaching", it is in that subject where I start involving English major apprentices with the 1999 ENSJ English program, its contradictions, incongruities and the challenges it implies.

Most of the challenges of this program have to do with the fact that it was designed with no knowledge of curriculum design not even knowledge of what English language teaching and learning require regarding time in hundreds of hours of study, and knowledge of TOEFL scores and their translation to levels of the Common European Framework, what makes them seem as intricate and deceiving aspects, or at least they could evenly be misunderstood as so. As a result, most of the times the majority of the English major apprentices were not able to accomplish the objectives in the fifth semester or English level III of the English program.

According to the 1999 ENSJ English Program SEP (2000), there is no English score or level requirement at its beginning, when apprentices attend the third semester (English I). This is not reasonable, because it makes them recline academically. In the fourth semester (English II) the program requires apprentices have a TOEFL score of 400. It is not fair either, first, because it is inferior and second, because it makes it impossible for apprentices to increase 100 points in only 64 hours (one semester) in order to accomplish the TOEFL score 475 or 500 in the fifth semester in English III. Experience has told me that every semester, apprentices can increase between 20 and 30 points in the TOEFL. In the sixth semester (English IV) apprentices must have a TOEFL score of 550, a score even more difficult to achieve.

Considering and brazing another important issue recommended within the English program, in the section of English II, in the final comments: Students must know about the purposes of formation of the B. A. and the major, specifically what is demanded from them in each one of the four English levels of the English program. They must know this information in advance, before enrolling, or at least since the beginning of their studies in ENSJ. Coinciding and agreeing with this recommendation, I proceeded to act according to it. Apprentices must be informed. I thought that if this were consummate, most of the problematic issues would be diminished or solved immediately before the problem expands.

Thus, in the Power Point Presentation to show to apprentices in second semester, I share a table that shows information about the semester, the English level and the discordant TOEFL score required according to the 1999 English

Program at ENSJ, but it also shows a fair TOEFL score, one that is feasible and reachable, according to the theory of times of the Common European Framework of Reference.

SEMESTER	ESTGLI SHLEV	ENSJ 1999 English Program TOEFL scores established	Appropriate TOEFL score	Comments
3	1		460	30 points each semester
4	2	400	490	Idem
5	3	500	520	Idem
6	4	550	550	Idem

I offer this information to the group in order to negotiate whether they want to adhere to it or not; fortunately, my groups have all complied with it. Otherwise, I explain to them that they will feel deceived by the program if we all follow what is erroneously required in it. Besides that there is the risk that they cannot attain the sixth semester, because when we follow the program as it reads, it is in the fifth semester where apprentices jam.

Another modification done to the program was the implementation of the TOEFL preparation activities from the first level of this English program in third semester and until the fourth level in the sixth semester. Before this implementation apprentices arrived in the fifth semester without having knowledge of the TOEFL, without having done a TOEFL before, and without TOEFL practice or preparation. Furthermore, it is well known that doing a standardized multiple choice test requires plentiful practice and some preparation. Thornbury (2006) underlines the following, regarding the usefulness of frequent practice: "The only way to prepare for a cloze test is by doing lots of cloze tests."

TOEFL has some characteristics of cloze tests for its combination of gap-filling in multiple-choice questions. This implementation allowed apprentices to practice with the TOEFL and to do frequent and innumerable TOEFL tests since they attend the third semester of their career, but its constant practice allowed them not only to develop their linguistic understanding and management of English but to improve their scores in the different sections of this test and on its whole.

Another adjustment I also implemented was the creation of the grading criteria for the four English levels of the program. For instance, part of this implementation was aimed to avoid grading apprentices with a TOEFL score only, as it had been done in ENSJ for more than a decade, and even worse, since it seemed to be done as a deceiving surprise to welcome apprentices to the fifth semester. It was at this point (fifth semester) that professors demanded TOEFL scores of 500 to our apprentices, who had never done a TOEFL before.

The lack of an appropriate grading criteria, since there was only one criterion to consider in order to grade apprentices, which was the TOEFL score, had, as a result, awful outcomes from apprentices in the TOEFL, their scores were most of the times below 500. Evenly, professors used to only consider a TOEFL score to define whether the apprentice approved the semester or not. However, English oral ability is also important. Thus, with the changes made to the grading process, the grade each period and the final one are to be obtained from two sources: TOEFL score and oral exam. Besides considering these two sources, I also dosed the TOEFL scores, this is, I removed assessment pathologies such as assessing students as follows:

IF apprentice's TOEFL score = 500 = 10 (Example in 5th semester)

IF apprentice's TOEFL score = 499 = 5 (ídem)

Instead, I proposed the following dosage to the academy:

IF apprentice's TOEFL score = 520 = 10 (Example in the fifth semester)

IF apprentice's TOEFL score = 510 = 9 (ídem)

IF apprentice's TOEFL score = 500 = 8 (ídem)

IF apprentice's TOEFL score = 490 = 7 (ídem)

IF apprentice's TOEFL score = 480 = 6 (ídem)

IF apprentice's TOEFL score = 470 = 5 (ídem)

I designed the assessment dosage for each semester from the third to the sixth. Nowadays we are having better results; I have been observing English major apprentices' improvement every semester. These outcomes are being accomplished at more than six years later after the first implementation of these changes within my

classes within my groups and taking advantage of the so called teaching freedom we all have in this system, and once understanding that we cannot make any changes to the National curricula and their programs and that we must respect them as they were designed, even if they are defective, contradictory, incongruent or even outdated.

Dropouts in the fifth and the sixth semesters of the degree and English major have considerably decreased and it becomes easier for our apprentices to increase their TOEFL score, since they receive the preparation to it and have more time to accomplish it. Now they have a better control of their study and preparation time. Their level of stress has also declined.

There is still a lot to improve. Every fifth or sixth semester, a scanty number of apprentices, struggle to accomplish the minimum passing score. Most of the times their oral ability is fine, but their TOEFL score is low. Nevertheless, they obtain the lowest grade and pass, but every year, in the seventh semester, mentors demand them to officially prove that they have a TOEFL score of 550 in that semester. This situation has not stopped although it is arbitrary. The 1999 ENSJ English program clearly establishes that students must prove that they have the level B2 or TOEFL score 550 when they are in the eighth semester and not in the seventh, as it reads as follows: "English IV (sixth semester) is the last level of General English of the major, and its main purpose is that students reach the level "FCE" (First Certificate Exam referred to as FCE) by Cambridge or the TOEFL score 550 which have been established as the minimum level to accomplish graduation, thus, guaranteeing the appropriate mastery of the English language in order to perform as English teachers. (...) Any indication that shows that a student has not been able to meet this requirement and reach this goal must be reason enough for the teacher of this subject to immediately encourage the students to make a major effort in order to reach it. In the case a student does not reach the level FCE or TOEFL 550 in the sixth semester, that student must make an effort to accomplish it during the last two semesters left (seventh and eighth) before finishing the major (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2000).

Mentors of the English major semesters seventh and eighth even made apprentices commit to prove that they would have the score within a very short period of time by making them sign a letter. That behavior really affects apprentices' performance. If apprentices are not able to prove that they have reached a TOEFL score of 550, they are immediately not allowed to pass to the eighth semester or in the worst case they are not allowed to graduate.

In the understanding that when a program, a procedure, a teaching process and other aspects of education are evaluated or when apprentices' learning or learners are assessed, it is considered a pathology to focus on the downsides or weaknesses only, I want to acknowledge one of the positive aspects of the program: It promotes apprentices' communicative competence development by having all their English major subjects taught and debated in English. This is something really remarkable since according to Murdoch (1994) it is known that language development provision in teacher training curricula is a concept that has not been easily accepted as central part of the curricula for teacher training institutions.

In Addition, Cullen (1994) recognizes that an in-service teacher training education program which fails to improve apprentices' English command of the language to use more fluently and confidently in the classroom is definitely failing to meet those needs. He also adds that unfortunately, research shows that only some teacher training programs are capable of achieving the objective of improving apprentices' communicative command of the target language.

At the beginning of the section of Didactic Orientations, there is the remainder that states that one of the main objectives of the Degree in Secondary School Education is to favor students' use of English as another means of communication which is a purpose that goes beyond the tendency to study to pass exams centered exclusively on grammar (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2000). Unfortunately, this remainder seems to be not only ignored but rather carried out in an opposite way, since within the same English program TOEFL is the only instrument erroneously consider to evaluate students' communicative competence in English.

Just as the remainder mentioned above is not followed as it is, and this together with the fact that most subjects in the English major are not taught in English

bring the existence of a “null program”. According to Eisner (1994), the null program is the parts of the program which are not taught, considered or used in practice; the lack of them or their avoidance usually send negative messages to student apprentices of not being important in the educational experience. Perhaps, the fact that these parts of the program have been ignored or avoided could be another reason of English major apprentices’ language outcomes and often of their discouragement to continue studying the English major in ENSJ.

One of the different sections of the ENSJ 1999 English program in which the importance of using English in class is emphasized is the introduction section which reads: It is necessary that daily classroom work be carried out in English as a means of communication in all the subjects of the major, thus, students will be in better and more favorable conditions to accomplish the graduate profile expected during their formation (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2000).

Another remainder of the use of English communicatively is in the Presentation in the section II which reads that: “it is necessary that daily classroom work in all the subjects of the English Major be done in English as a means of communication, in order to favor the achievement of the initial formation of English teachers.” (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2000).

Later in the section of criteria for the course development of the subject English I, criterion number seven reads:

The use of the foreign language should not be restricted to performing programmed activities or to the texts required in a formal way as a part of the work in the course; it is necessary that the teacher encourages his/her students to use English in daily situations in and out of school. A main factor to propitiate an ‘environment that alphabetizes in the foreign language’ is that the teacher uses the language orally and in writing as a mean of communication with the students. (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2000. p 11).

As part of the section of the Didactic Orientation of the subject Literature in English I it is stated that it is of essential importance to remember that in this subject as in the other ones of the major, English has to be used as a means of communication in the classroom. Thus, the professor of this subject will systematically encourage this practice in order to accomplish students' fluent expression of their ideas with confidence.

In the introduction to English II, it is mentioned that the use of English is intensified through the study of the different subjects coursed in this semester in order to perfect communicative competence.

In the general purposes of English II, it is underlined the importance of making students aware of the use of English as a means of communication and instructions in the classroom (studying, conversing, organizing and participating in activities, providing feedback, clearing doubts, and offerings farewells, among other actions) in order to encourage the development of communicative activities. Regarding the use of English as a means of communication in general in the English classroom, the professor is the example to follow: "...professors must use comprehensible language without diminishing the demand of looking for the accomplishment of students' intermediate advanced level" (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2000).

Then in the section of the Didactic Orientations for English II, the remainder is that analogically to English I, this level must be developed by permanently and systematically using English either orally or in a written form (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2000).

In the subject of Strategies and Resources I, specifically in the section of Work Orientations and theme Guide, and in the Introduction, it is stated that in order for students to obtain the opportunity to advance in the English four abilities, it is proposed that class activities should be carried out in English as the means of communication. (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2000).

In the section of English III, in Course Content the following is mentioned while in English I and English II, students get familiar with a growing repertoire of expressions for routines; in English III, free discourse must be encouraged to

resemble the experience with the language of any person who learns it while living in an English speaking country (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2000).

A part of the section of Didactic Orientations, the subject Literature in English II reads that the professor who teaches this subject will continue using English as a means of communication in order to go on with the routine of developing English as the language of the classroom. (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2000).

In the fifth semester, subject Strategies and Resources II, section Orientations and Work Guide, it reads that in order for students can communicate orally in English outside the classroom, they must learn to communicate with a purpose that is not language practice (the how or the grammar of the language) only, but centered on communication (information, ideas, opinions, feelings). In the same subject but in the section of the General Purposes, specifically purpose number one reads that through this course that is focused on Listening comprehension and Oral Expression, it is expected that students, future middle school English teachers, develop their communicative competence by speaking English. (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2000).

In the subject Historical Evolution of English (sixth semester), section General Purposes, one of the them is aimed to develop students' English Communicative Competence through the use of English in the different tasks, assignments and homework performed either in or outside the classroom. Whereas in the section of Theme Guide and Work Orientations the program specifies that this course was designed in Spanish and English; however, classes have to be taught mainly in English in order to strengthen apprentices' mastery of the language. (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2000).

The General Purpose number four of the subject Strategies and Resources III is to analyze some formats of the written expression in English and their different conventionalisms according to the type of vocabulary and register "...specifically in academic written form, so that students have the necessary tools that will help them lead the development of their thesis document in English" (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2000).

Even though this reminder is constant, lessons, discussions and tasks are, more often than not, executed in Spanish. Perhaps, it happens because the 1999 ENSJ English program only provides suggestions, never mandatory procedures on how educators are to teach the courses.

I believe that the fact that I have always taught the subjects in English, even the subject of the Observation of the Teaching Practice (“OPD” in Spanish), has contributed to develop and improve student apprentices’ English level and confidence; however, it will considerably improve when the rest of the professors of the English major do it, too.

Another issue that evidences the existence of a “null program” is the lack of encouragement to write their thesis project document in English. In the section dedicated to the subject Strategies and Resources III (sixth semester), it is added that the focus or goal of reading and writing is that students develop their writing skills at an advanced level as part of their communicative competence. In this course they have to carry out an analysis of a variety of written forms in English and their conventions, especially academic writing, so that they will have the necessary tools that will help them do their thesis project in English. Up to now, there are no thesis project documents written in English in the library at ENSJ.

Even though the issues mentioned above, the quality of the four English levels has slightly improved over the last seven years, but in 2011 another challenge arose, the rise of a new and very ambitious 2011 English Program for Basic Education. Then, it was often said that middle schools would start to work with this new program by 2016, but still, its existence was threatening, overall knowing that the level of English teachers for middle schools would now be a C1. That has been undergoing since 2011 while at ENSJ the English academy continues working with the old 1999 program.

There is now a huge gap between the program (and all what a program implies such as content, levels, knowledge, etc.) with which future middle school English teachers are trained and the one these same teachers will be using in middle schools. It is not known when all the middle schools will officially be using the 2011,

but it can happen any time from now. Despite inconsistently, some middle schools have already made the shift and currently work with the 2011 program.

Professors in Escuela Normal Superior de Jalisco must be trained on that new 2011 middle school English program of study (Cycle 4), in order to be able to train student apprentices and future middle school English teachers. Officially, our collegiality had only attended one course on the middle school 2011 English program.

The differences between the previous 2006 English program and the new 2011 English program cycle four also represent a huge gap. Language level structures and functions to teach, and teaching methodology, considerably vary and increase from one program to the other.

Before the middle school 2011 English program, there was no difficulty working with the one of 1999 at ENSJ, neither was it difficult to couple it to the one from the year 2006 of middle schools. Regarding content, the 2006 program was extremely reduced to the most basic level of English. It was actually more basic than its previous 1993. In its content, the 2006 program includes the Present, Past and Future Simple and the Present Continuous tenses while the previous one (1993) managed the same stuff, plus the Present Perfect tense.

When it comes to level of English, both programs (1999 at ENSJ and 2006 for middle schools) have been coupled nicely, since the 1999 ENSJ program requires future English teachers reach a level of TOEFL 550 (B2 or upper Intermediate) and with the 2006 Middle School Education Program (MSEP), ENSJ professors could still shine or boast and feel satisfied that their apprentices had or obtained a higher level than the one required from middle school teachers working with the 2006 MSEP which simply requires a B1 level to be an English teacher.

But now with the new 2011 middle school English program, it is clear that ENSJ is largely outdated and detached from the basic level. If we do not do something to fix this situation, the 2011 MSEP will evidence us as inefficient and unable to form English teachers, and will also show how tremendously outdated the 1999 ENSJ English Program is. The worst would be that it could also be the hint that marks the end of the English major at ENSs. There would not be a reason for its

existence, at least not for the level of middle school. In fact, ENSJ English major students if fortunate would be recruited as English teachers for preschool or “kindergarten.”

ENSJ suddenly finds itself facing the challenge of the new 2011 program that requires each teacher has a C1 level to be able to teach in middle schools. According to the new 2011 English language program, in addition to having the English level C1, our apprentices must also know how to teach or facilitate adolescents learning of higher English structures and functions. The 2011 syllabus includes the Present, Past and Future Simple and Continuous tenses, Passive Voice, Reported speech, tag questions, Direct and Indirect speech, causative voice and the rest of advance structures and functions of the language, most of them are structures with which our apprentices face difficulty to understand in order to answer a TOEFL, not to mention to facilitate their learning. This situation has resulted in crisis in the system, to both ENSs offering the English major pedagogic formation and training and middle school English teaching and students learning.

The fact that apprentices at ENSJ are accomplishing TOEFL 550, in a shorter period of time than the one established in theory by Cambridge and the European Council, does not mean that it is easy. Although the level of stress has declined, the demands regarding level of English and a high TOEFL score are still there, thus apprentices are often under pressure. According to this theory a person needs between 500 and 600 hours of study to increase the level from B1 (TOEFL 440) to B2 (TOEFL 550). B1 is the level with which most of our apprentices enter the major in ENSJ lately. It is really a challenge for our students, since they ought to accomplish it in only 260 hours.

Now with this new requirement of the 2011 cycle 4 program (middle education), mentors must facilitate that apprentices at ENSJ accomplish a level C1 in 260 hours, then, eventually facilitate it in middle schools, when theory establishes that it is accomplished by investing 700 or 800 hours of study. Up to now, I have only considered English competence level needed.

In addition to English language competence, ENSJ English major apprentices must have knowledge of pedagogy, management of the new elements to consider

in the planning of their practice, and the didactic approach that informs teaching and learning in the middle education 2011 program. In compliance with this program, not only is the English level higher and more demanding, but its methodology is also different. ENSs apprentices have been lately facing the challenge of having to work with the 2011 program when they have their teaching and observation practice in middle school settings, for instance, it is imminent that ENSs mentors and apprentices have to be familiarized themselves with this program, however, reality shows that not even do mentors know it enough.

What has been done until now seems to be confusing for our apprentices (they have expressed it) and instead of being helpful, it becomes a barrier to do things well. Not only Teaching Practice Observation (OPD) course mentors make difficult its comprehension, they in fact, and perhaps with no intention, make things complicate to implement the 2011 program since some mentors have demanded apprentices to combine characteristics of both programs (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2006 and 2011).

More and more middle schools are migrating from the 2006 program to the updated 2011 while at ENSJ, its program continues lagging behind. 2014 was the beginning year in which most of our apprentices were given topics of the new 2011 syllabus in order to design their classes and lesson plans according to it.

The National Council of Education Authorities (CONAEDU) agreed that states education authorities, that have a stately supported English program, must start a process of migration from their state English programs to the national English program 2011, based on the agreement R.22^a.8 emanated from the CONAEDU twenty second National Ordinary Plenary Meeting, celebrated in Mexico City in November 2010.

However, an article underlines that one of the challenges is the lack of appropriate options for the teaching update of their professors (Sandoval, 2001). Teachers are professionals in the field of education, and professionals at any field of study always seek training and specialized knowledge; in addition, a profession is a job that requires advanced and broad education.

In November 2012, ENSJ English professors had a course about the 2011 cycle 4 English program of study (middle education), at Higher Studies Technological Institute (ITESO). The course was not enough, since it was only an introduction and we were not provided with the material and textbooks necessary to start working with the program, as some middle school teachers who have been trained on the educational reform do. It is necessary to receive training in order to understand it at an extent that we can in turn facilitate its understanding and implementation and extend the English language confidence and skills, pedagogical knowledge and professional competences of teachers following the NEPBE, to deliver high quality, more motivating and meaningful English classes to their pupils and to help them become facilitators and leaders of a teaching model for working with the NEPBE. There is definitely a need for more preparation and training on all the above mentioned. If this training were not necessary, there would not exist the program to train on the NEPBE by the British Council.

Instituto Cultural Mexico-Americano (Mexican American Culture Institute) held the Languages and intercultural Festival in Jalisco 2014. There, Laura A. Meza, the manager of the British Council, who was part of the group of speakers, talked about English courses focused on the 2011 program that the British Council offers to groups of English teachers of public schools from all over the country. These courses are given in Mexico, City.

When she was asked about the price and the time to start the course, she said that their courses are not openly offered to the public. They offer the courses to the Secretariat of Public Education and it decides which teachers deserve a scholarship to attend it. They pass the list of teachers to the British Council and SEP affords it. It is impossible to attend these courses if one is not considered by SEP to get a scholarship. She explained that it is not possible to attend their courses without consideration and authorization of SEP. Therefore, being things so controlled does not help ENSs mentors to evolve.

This British Council program is aimed to the formation of National English program for Basic Education (NEPBE) facilitators, for instance very necessary for

the English major faculty at ENSJ. It is a training course to explore the knowledge, skills and competences that professors have, and need to work with the NEPBE.

All Teacher mentors trained through the project will understand the content, approach and methodology of the Mexican National English Curriculum and will be able to provide regular and consistent training and mentoring services for teachers as well as collaborative support for each other through the electronic sharing of training materials (Gil, 2012).

There are some courses promoted by the Secretariat of Public Education at the beginning of each school year, but according to the teachers who have attended these courses, they are not updated at all, and they are often improvised and badly planned by their advisors. In such conditions, teachers seek their own ways to upgrade. Teachers usually attend courses related to their professional interests at other institutions of higher education such as private or public universities, but they pay those courses because they consider that unlike those offered by SEP or their institution, these courses do have utility. This individual search for useful courses outside those offered by SEP (excepting those co-offered together with the British Council) seems to be a widespread practice among normal school and middle school teachers. "However, teachers are often concerned about the economic outlay such courses involve and this sometimes discourages them" (Sandoval, 2001).

The facts that the ENSJ English program is already obsolete and badly designed, and its higher education level is lagging widely behind the basic level for which apprentices are formed clearly tell us that we need to first update the ENSJ English program and professors, and then anchor to the new 2011 cycle 4 English program of study, otherwise we will risk that ENSJ English apprentices and graduates do not become suitable teachers of middle schools. Perhaps the system will start recruiting college students from the different universities in Jalisco.

In fact, it is already happening that the Secretariat of Education through its Normal School Office has been launching some calls for participation to work as

English teachers in public middle schools, but they have only been aimed to graduates of the degree in teaching English as a foreign language from the University of Guadalajara rather than to ENSJ student apprentices or graduates within the same public system of education Normal School Office is head of.

Sandoval (2001) describes what being a teacher in middle schools is like, managing the presence of a new kind of teacher educator in the middle school education system. It reads that if we go back to forty years ago, the professional profile of middle school teachers would very likely be the following: elementary school teacher who also counted on a higher education “normal school” degree and major on one of the specific subjects offered there or a graduate high school person who then studied 5 years in a higher education Normal school. The advantages of studying and graduating from a Normal school, then, assured and guaranteed having a job after graduation, this advantageous situation is no longer true. However, Normal school teachers who prevailed then have given way to a different professional, one who is a graduate from other institutions of higher education like universities. Nowadays a vast number of middle school teachers are professionals with no pedagogical preparation, who, according to some official data, constitute 70% of the faculty of middle schools in Mexico, City.

In Guadalajara, as in other cities of Mexico, the number of university graduates who arrive in the public system of middle school education has been increasing considerably. It is mentioned in the same article that the present lack of attraction of the teaching career at Normal Schools have decreased the number of graduates from Escuelas Normales Superiores (Sandoval, 2001). Here it is the opinion of a graduate professional and once Principal at ENSJ: while normal schools are currently considered colleges, they do not share the characteristics of the latter. The fact that they have been the subject of scant studies is significant. In my opinion this has to do with its own task and with its historical process. Those who are part of this culture, either for having been formed there or for it was our workplace, are not strangers to the widespread perception of what might be called the *normalista* culture which is very different to that of university graduates. It is a culture defined as closed, precisely because it has not been characterized by sharing what occurs within. It has

not been characterized by sharing what occurs inside or expressing its position on the proposed national education policy, but they have rather taken or consumed the products of *research on education* through curriculum designed without their participation (Camacho, 2007).

As professional outside this system who has not been formed and trained in ENSJ, I can immediately perceive the compliance with what is prescribed in programs without questioning or reinterpreting them is not officially established in writing in any of the programs of "Normal Schools", however, it seems to be a characteristic of *normalism* that is uniformly rooted or learned. This characteristic can be clearly seen in the conformity, passivity and submission to quite ambitious programs as if they were recipes. The worst problem is that since those programs are not tailored made, but extremely out of context, they in the end do not work and it is English teachers who are often blamed for such outcomes.

Example of the above mentioned is that most ENSJ professors continue faithfully attached to a program that was originally prescribed 16 years ago, without requiring reform, update or training or without refuting it. There is, therefore, no defense. These shortcomings could be used against them soon in the future. Perhaps it will facilitate government blaming professors, apprentices and undergraduate teachers for what is currently happening in education, mainly the negative outcomes.

In the field of education, we, teachers, have not had the power to stop the coming changes nor been able to make government understand the importance of taking teachers' point of view into consideration to mandate on the field of language education. It is only teachers who are apt to commit on behalf of teachers or to decide whether negotiate or not educational policies with world organisms.

Perhaps, it is why normal schools seem to always be involved in an endless process of reform or change with no solution or improvement. That is to say: A never ending story. It seems that when ENSs are hardly adapting to certain way of doing things or of working issues, the demand for a new way of doing things suddenly arises.

English teachers' view should be retrieved in a nation-wide diagnostic and allow English Language Teaching (ELT) experts to design the middle education programs of study as well as the ENSJ English Major academic program. However, when I say experts, I mean to take into account those high professionals in linguistics, curriculum development and language pedagogy but also the experienced teachers who actually teach. This way, serious mistakes such as naming English taught in Mexico as English as a Second Language (ESL) can be avoided. EFL is the teaching of English in a non-English-speaking region which also means that it is the English taught outside English speaking countries. Mexico is not an English speaking country, which means that the English taught and learned in Mexico is not a second language. Therefore, the English taught and learned in Mexico is English as a Foreign Language (EFL) rather than English as a Second Language (ESL).

A distinction constantly mentioned in the field of language teaching and learning is underlined by Sánchez (1997) who says that a foreign language is learnt institutionally and after the mother tongue has been acquired. She clarifies that the learning of EFL takes place in an institutional atmosphere, and even if the teacher tries to fit this learning to the most natural resemblance of natural acquisition it will not be acquisition, it will be learning. Sanchez (1997) adds that once out of the classroom, students' level of competency in English cannot be compared to that of a native speaker. On the other hand, Sanchez (1997) describes acquisition and argues that it happens in the early years of a child and in a natural environment, since immersion in the actual environment of the language that is intended to acquire is essential. Acquisition is generated in a process of linguistic interaction through mechanisms of imitation, significance and reinforcement that guide speech and respond to immediate needs aimed to solve the communication requirements in the formulation of segmented words (almost never formal or with complete sentences). The person acquiring the local language has no formal or explicit knowledge of it. An actual communication need is necessary for acquisition to happen. She states that 'acquisition' is given as a second language (local language of the context in which it is acquired) and its process is similar to the process followed when children acquired

their first language or mother tongue. In Sanchez' own words: "Acquisition refers to automatic processes in which speed and spontaneity are crucial and at which individuals have no time to use conscious linguistic mechanisms" (1997, p 44).

In other words it depends on the context and sociolinguistic environment (natural or institutional) if the target language (English) is to be learnt or acquired or if it is called EFL or ESL. Unfortunately, on the one hand, teachers do not complain about these issues nor do they want to risk their jobs.

Issues that can happen when others who are not English teachers involve in language education can be exemplified as in the web magazine article AZ (2014) which reported that the Secretariat of Public Education argued that in the new curricula contents must be reduced so that children can dedicate more time to focus on logical reasoning and critical thinking of less content. The idea of reducing content opposes middle school English 2011 program since it manages to accomplish considerable content in each lesson, in comparison with the previous 2006 and 1993 programs. 2011 English middle school program is so far the only one that handles excessive content to teach and learn and that represents the most drastic change among the rest of the programs of the same curriculum to teach the other subjects in middle school.

Nowadays, there is steady degradation and bad reputation of professors and their profession by the media. During the last decade, Mexican teachers of the public system of education have received considerable criticism regarding their performance inside and outside their classrooms. It is now very little recognized that the phenomenon of the low quality of education should not be attributable only to teachers, they are only part of a large affecting gear. It is clear that this problem cannot be solved by focusing on a single element, it is necessary to monitor and address all influential factors. Evaluation needs to be holistic, not only teachers' performance, but also curriculum design, schools' material and human resources, principals' administration, pedagogic and socio-cultural management of schools and parents educational follow up to their sons and daughters at school. The extremely important issue that there has been no reform to improve the quality of the formation of English teachers for basic education at ENSJ in 16 years is a matter of educational

policy and mostly underlines the challenge faced by professors and apprentices of the English Major at *Escuela Normal Superior de Jalisco*.

The excessive control of government over education hinders professors from acting and constructing their own field, mostly if professors maintain submissive themselves. Saving, in Camacho (2007), says:

We find that there are a few studies available that allow us to explain the ordinary reality of life in schools in Mexico (...) there are very few studies on normal schools and the education provided there. There are no studies in which they address their culture in depth, their identity, their professional visions and disagreements between the conceptions circulating within them. This knowledge must be identified, constructed, systematized and published for the design and coordination of a new reform. If this does not exist, we must start then.

With the exception of Camacho in 2007 and the presentation of my paper with the English program evaluation results in 2009 in Normal School of Atequiza, and state forums in 2010, 2013 and 2014, until 2014 I had not heard of anyone else at ENSJ who had participated in this process of construction, systematization and publishing of knowledge about what happens in ENSJ, and who had provided it to reformers. Fortunately, Navarro (2015) talks about the experience undergone for more than two decades in two contexts: middle school and ENSJ. He identifies a cluster of inconsistencies in the subject based curricular organization and in the interdisciplinary areas that together with weaknesses intrinsic to the logic of the curricular design and actual implementation of it in the pedagogical formation of teachers have given birth to a disjointed academic work.

Navarro (2015) critically analyses the pedagogical livelihood of the middle school curricula; beginning with the behaviorist based curriculum of 1973, followed by the 1993 one which introduced constructivism as the theoretical foundation for schools administration and teaching, and ending with the competence development based curricula of 2006 and 2011. He related his curricular analysis to teachers'

formation at ENSJ with its subject based curricula of 1973 and 1976, as well as the area based or interdisciplinary curriculum of 1983 and making clear, at final analysis, some weaknesses of design as well as contradictions in the implementation of the subject based 1999 curriculum, which was designed under competences development principles and which is still operating in 2016. In addition to his analysis, Navarro provides a range of possibilities for a pertinent curriculum organization in areas, but fulfilling genuinely interdisciplinary work in the design and the curriculum academic instrumentation. Hence the amplitude given to the concept of interdisciplinary organization and the problematic that its consolidation implies. An example of how the consolidation of the interdisciplinary organization is troublesome to accomplish, coinciding with Navarro, is clear in the fact that the rest of the subjects of the English major that support the English program are suggested to be taught in English in order to contribute from the other subjects to the students' improvement of the communicative competence in English, however, the real curriculum shows that it barely happens, neither in a written way, nor spoken since most of these subjects are taught in Spanish.

Navarro (2015) raises the issue of the transition from constructivist discussions and explanations, in academic work, both in middle education and ENSJ during the 1990's to the implementation of the competencies discourse that has characterized the 1999 curriculum. In fact, he adds, the 1999 curriculum seemed to have belittled and broken with constructivist pedagogy; this seems to be resembled with emphasis nowadays since the development of competencies sounds more often and stronger than constructivism, which is something that Navarro also considers by saying that constructivism and competency based education seem to be understood as mutually exclusive theories. That is, the opportunity to integrate both perspectives seems to be lost.

Some of the areas of discussion that Navarro (2015) mentions and that coincide with the results obtained from the curriculum evaluation I implemented to the ENSJ 1999 English program are the weak formation in the understanding and management of content, the importance of recognizing the paradigm that guides the design of the 1999 curriculum, as well as the pedagogical approach that defines its

implementation in the classroom, the comprehension of the concept of competency with a connotation of segregation or of competence, which implies integration and the acknowledgment of pedagogic directionality as the basis of curricular renovation.

The comprehension of such distinction of competency vs. competence, that Navarro (2015) mentions is also another issue identified in the curriculum evaluation I practiced to the 1999 English program and that causes confusion. First of all, the concept of ‘competency’ is already wrongly conceived in the 1999 English program; secondly, it is equally wrongly understood by the professors who implement the program and whose procedures are governed by it, as they execute it literally.

In the ENSJ English program, objectives are stated in terms of a proficiency level, others refer to the accomplishment of the different skills altogether (speaking, writing, listening and reading) and overlapped, and they do not specify student’s performance. Objectives do not mention the performance required from students, since objectives are expected in TOEFL or Cambridge examination scores rather than on significant changes in patterns of the students’ developmental level of fluency, language use and confidence, vocabulary, skills, among other aspects to consider according to Richards (1996) and Richards and Rogers (1986). Neither are objectives precise statements about what content or skills students must master in order to obtain a particular goal, nor do they mention the process to follow in order to develop the use of English for communicative purposes; for instance the knowledge and the skills necessary to meet students’ language needs is not clear (Brown 1995). There is no allusion or citation to the referents of the Common European Framework level of performance.

In the document of the English Major (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2000), specifically in the section of Formation Areas, the first area refers to the mastery of the communicative competence and the referred level is Upper Intermediate to start the study of the major.

In the introduction to the subject of Literature in English I, fourth semester of the English major, it reads that one of the main purposes in the initial training of future English teachers is to acquire the necessary knowledge and mastery of the foreign language, both to develop their communication skills and to teach it. Then,

later in the same section it also reads that the course of "Literature in English I" is intended to achieve that 'normal' students know various forms of literary expressions in order to enrich their own culture and develop their English language proficiency. However, it is necessary to consider that one of the targets set as part of the formation of English Major students is that in this semester they achieve an Intermediate level of English, at least. In addition, among the purposes of the subject of Literature in English I, the second underlines the development of mastery of English through the study of diverse contemporary literary texts and by implementing the four skills SEP (2000).

This information was written in English. In the introduction to English I, third semester, it is admitted within the program that: the level of English which the students entering *escuelas normales* possess is variable. Some have managed to get to certain degree of competence in order to express orally in a fluent way, others have developed reading comprehension more, but they face difficulties when speaking or writing. For these reasons, one of the main purposes of the initial formation will continue acquiring knowledge about the English language and will access to higher of future teachers is to promote the development and reinforcement of the communicative competence they require, not only to teach the language to their students, but to continue improving their linguistic skills. To pay attention to the purpose already mentioned, as a part of the group of subjects of the major included in the *curriculum*, there are four specific courses of English (English I, II, III, and IV), and they correspond to the line of *perfecting communicative competence*, in which the students levels of mastery of their linguistic skills through performing multiple activities in which they listen, read, speak and write with an intention and in specific situations (SEP, 2000, p 7).

In the introduction to English II, the following is mentioned: The use of English is intensified through the study of the different subjects coursed in this semester in order to perfect communicative competence. Following, in the section of the General Purposes of this subject the second purpose reads: Ensure that all students reach a minimum level of language proficiency in a Preliminary English Test (PET), equivalent to the University of Cambridge or TOEFL 400 points. In the evaluation

section of 'English II', it is suggested to use a TOEFL or a PET as the instrument to evaluate students at the end of the course. The fact that students do a TOEFL or a PET at the end of the course will help students get familiarity with the characteristics of the proficiency test, SEP (2000).

The Introduction to English III underlines the following: the formation of foreign language teachers has peculiarities in relation to other disciplinary fields, because in addition to having a formal knowledge of the subject (foreign language), it requires students acquire the ability to use it as a means of communication and education. The first purpose of English III is the development of communicative abilities (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and integrated abilities. The second purpose is that students advance in the mastery of English in order to achieve a level equivalent to PET or TOEFL 450-475, SEP (2000).

In the introduction to English IV the following is advised: The professor in charge of this subject focuses on students' linguistic proficiency development in oral and written expressions, since the tests of competence (proficiency tests) demand high levels of proficiency, in addition to communicative competence. Furthermore, in the section of General Purposes (SEP, 2000), the first purpose is to develop accuracy in Speaking and Writing, in addition to students' communicative skills with attention to linguistic accuracy; the second purpose is to ensure that all students advance toward the goal of proficiency in English at the level of FCE by Cambridge or TOEFL 550, goal that, if possible, must be achieved by the end of the sixth semester or before graduation the latest. In this same section of English IV it is underlined that the central element in this course is the concrete and well established goal of reaching the level of FCE/TOEFL 550.

Standardized exams of competence, such as these are used with the objective of measuring individuals' aptitude when they are interested in studying in a university abroad, in getting a scholarship to attend graduate studies, and to attend the first course to be English teachers in the University of Cambridge, among other reasons. For instance, they represent a reliable and prestige evaluation of a language level suitable for a professional English teacher. Besides, in this same

sections it is advised the use of a TOEFL or an FCE preparation course for the first time in the program, SEP (2000).

As shown, the English program is aimed to the development of communicative competence and the different skills. However, purposes and goals are expected in levels or scores rather than specific performances, and assessed with the use of standardized and multiple choice tests that are, in fact, aimed to measure linguistic knowledge rather than the whole communicative competence. It is well known that TOEFL and Cambridge tests are multiple choice, cloze tests and not productive; they mostly assess linguistic knowledge (grammar, vocabulary) and Listening and Reading skills, but they do not promote students use or production of the language unless they include an oral test and the Test of Written English (TWE) in the case of TOEFL or any other written assignment for Cambridge Exams (SEP, 2000).

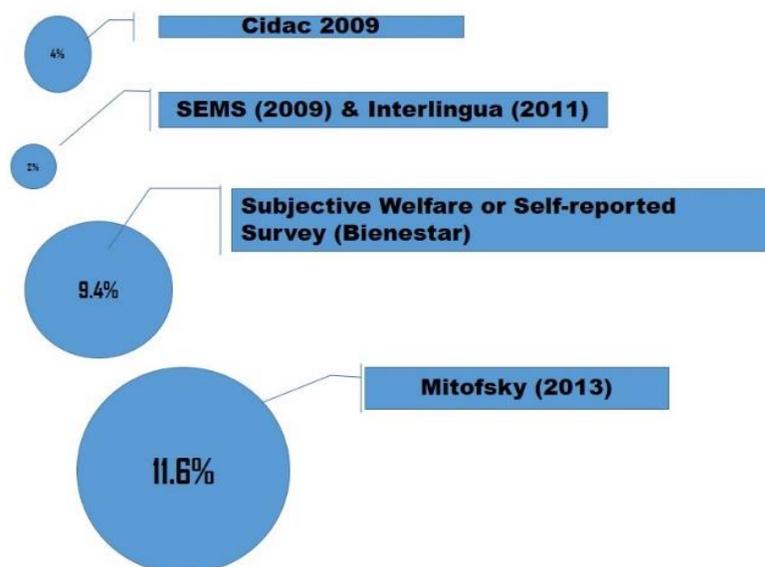
Being things this way, one can conclude that with the exception of the four English levels not are competencies developed neither assessed in the different subjects of the English Major Program that can support students development of the communicative competence, since most of the times the different subjects that compound the English Major Program and support the English course are taught in Spanish. In addition to this, students are assessed with only a three-section regular TOEFL in the semesters seven and eight, for instance the only part of the competence assessed is *Knowledge* leaving aside performance and attitude; and there are no thesis papers written in English as according to the program it is to happen.

Up to now, the lack of curriculum reform and the flagrant disregard for English teacher training at *Escuelas Normales Superiores* by government evidence some crisis in ELT in the whole public system of education, but mostly at ENSs that offer the English major. When the public system of education authority has ceased to provide educational institutions, at any of its levels of education, with the curricula to work with, it makes the basic case that the system of urban ENSs is failing, since the authority has ceased to promote the fluent development of the reform for them.

The last aspect to consider that does not help either is the fact that there is no official periodic measurement that allows us to know the percentage of the Mexican population that speaks English or with what level; nevertheless the level of English proficiency of teachers who teach this language. According to Tello (2015) what is definitely clear is that the lack of official data with these characteristics yields a negative signal on the relevance to the Mexican government, besides that what is not measure cannot be evaluated or improved. There are some surveys that have attempted to measure the proportion of the population that speaks English. This information is sparse and unofficial and the methodologies from which it comes from may yield unreliable results on the level of language proficiency of the Mexican population. The information usually comes from surveys of self-reported and not from objective exams or standardized measures on management of English.

However, what is possible to know is that the proportion of people who claim to speak the language is low. According to the English Proficiency Index by Education First (2014), Mexico has a low level of English proficiency. In 2014, Mexico obtained the 39th place of 63 countries evaluated and the sixth of America after Argentina, Peru and Brazil. Despite its geographical, economic and commercial closeness with the United States, Mexico has low levels of English in comparison with other competing countries of the region.

Proportion of the population that speaks English in Mexico according to different sources⁸:



According to the British Council (2014a) the failure in this competence in Mexico has so far been fundamentally a problem of education policy. There is no doubt that while an appropriate level of language proficiency among the population is the task of all sectors, the sector of education plays the most important role in the failure or success of the English national agenda. In the specific subject of English, the curriculum of public schools is extremely important because 86.5% of students attend public schools, most of which are run by the states (71.5 of the total).

Mexicanos Primero (2015) designed and implemented the first test of use and understanding of the English Language for high school graduates (EUCIS). However, it is important to consider what Tello (2015) –who is another entrepreneur—underlines: students who were in third grade of preschool when the PNIEB was first introduced in 2009—as a pilot program to some middle schools—will leave school until 2018, therefore, it is likely that not had middle school graduates who did EUCIS attended PNIEB since third grade preschool. Due to the fact of the current state of English teaching with PNIEB—the coverage of the national English Program is not yet complete—any standardized test will bias the results significantly. For a census test to be useful, this must be given to students of schools that have thoroughly participated in the program. The test methodology used by Mexicanos Primero (EUCIS) was implemented hastily, too early and to an unreliable sample. If this group of entrepreneurs remains insistent and inquisitively interfering in Mexican public education they must wait, perhaps their test EUCIS could serve as the basis for assessing PNIEB students in the long run, when the first cluster of students who had attended the four cycles of PNIEB is about to graduate, this is in the year 2018. However, even if Mexicanos Primero wait until 2018, there cannot be warrantee that the students in the sample had covered the three previous cycles.

Summing up and conclusions

All the issues underlined in this paper point to a firm dissipation of the “Higher Education Normal School” English program and English Major pedagogic-didactic forming and training. We cannot be careless about it nor relaxed. We should at least be informed and able to interpret the background threats we have been facing. In

fact, the background of ENSs offering the English major can give us the clues to properly forecast and act in order to overcome possible negative outcomes.

English teaching is definitely a challenge for ENSs and for the teachers of this subject since endless changes come and go to the curriculum at the basic level while the 1999 curriculum at the level of higher education in Normal Schools stays static and waiting still for the so much promised coming reform. Professors of the English major academy still wait for a deserved training that has not arrived yet. Training with which they should be the very first ones privileged to attend, but that on the contrary, this group of professors of the English collegiality at ENSJ seem to have become the system's most forgotten.

Meanwhile, the best recommendation is to avoid being idle while waiting for a change we are not sure will come. With the knowledge we have about the weaknesses and faults of the program and of our implementation, the English collegiality should implement adjustments to it and to our practice that will help improve students learning and development of their English communicative competence. We also need to remove the bad practices that contribute to the existence of a null program, an even worst to our apprentices' failure to develop an appropriate level of communicative competence.

Some feasible solutions to immediately implement are the following: Since, according to some rumors, all middle schools in Mexico will have to officially base the teaching of English ruled by the 2011 program of study in 2016, *Escuela Normal Superior de Jalisco* English professors must look forward to be trained on the 2011 program so that they can facilitate their apprentices' migration to it. If professors are properly trained since now, when there is no strong demand yet and it just starts to be slightly required, they will be ready when it becomes officially mandatory. ENSJ as a training institution needs to be updated and a step ahead of the basic level.

It is necessary to put into practice the ENSJ 1999 English program emphasis on teaching all the subjects of the English major in English. There is a constant reminding-through methodological advice-of encouraging mentors' intervention, class discussions and apprentices' participation in English.

“Higher Normal education” mentors should start working on the improvement of apprentices’ English language level by using English in all the subjects of the English major rather than only in the English language course. According to most ELT experts, this approach contributes to improve apprentices’ English level. This will eventually make apprentices become able to reach the C1 level.

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